2015

Kapsula

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SELECTIONS FROM THE 14TH ANNUAL
YORK UNIVERSITY ART HISTORY
GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

IMAGINED WORLDS

KAPSULA

JUNE 2015 SPECIAL ISSUE

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This special issue is a co-production of KAPSULA PRESS and the Art History Graduate Student Assocation of York University.

KAPSULA PRESS
44 Hedges Boulevard
Toronto, Ontario
M9B 3C4
Canada

Send general inquiries to: kapsula@kapsula.ca

Leave anonymous feedback through our website.

Eyes Without A Face is our official theme song.

LICENCING

 ISSN 2292 - 7204

The KAPSULA logo appears in House Gothic Bold Four. Headers are set in Berthold Akzidenz Grotesk and body copy is set in Archer.

SELECTIONS FROM THE 14th ANNUAL YORK UNIVERSITY ART HISTORY GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

IMAGINED WORLDS

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infinite incarnations

The 14th Annual York University Art History Graduate Student Symposium, *Imagined Worlds*, held in February 2015, sought to question the effigy of the real, notions of verisimilitude, and the productive spaces created by processes of simulation in art, history, ritual, and life. Given our recognition of the simulacrum as a representation of likeness, an image without the exacting substance of its original, and as a vehicle of hyper-reality, how has artistic activity and theory reacted to the virtualization of the real? Even before the emergence of the digital realm, art functioned as a means to reconstruct the imaginary. In gathering thinkers, writers, and makers from across North America, the *Imagined Worlds* symposium positioned itself between imaginary spaces, acting as a kind of cartography project - melting seemingly disparate maps of the imaginary atop one another.

"Worlding," as a process and a signifier, is in constant flux. Worlding, an active verb derived from Heidegger's *Time and Being* refers to a perpetual sense of movement, one that is both generative and elusive. Worlding is a never-ending exploration of our surroundings, seeking familiarity and understanding. Heidegger's worlding is a response to the thingness of the world, proposing that the thing is not simply a construction of humans, but also responds to all things. Reflecting on Heidegger's thingness, we imagined the vastness of worlding to include crafting, resuscitation, enmeshing and refracting not only of human processes, but also as the result of non-human and otherly-human agents. So for our purposes, worlding became a reciprocal forging of non-human things and human things, essential for (re)tracing histories and looking toward possible futures.

Moving from Heidegger's propositions, we also wished to consider the multiplicity of worlds through the angling and framing of cultural and institutional powers in this current moment and

> "'World picture' does not mean 'picture of the world' but, rather, the world grasped as picture. Beings as a whole are now taken in such a way that a being is first and only in being insofar as it is set in place by representing-producing humanity."
>
> —Martin Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture*, 1938.

throughout histories. Acknowledging lived experience as a valuable form of knowledge, worlding continues to splinter into endless processes of individuals, communities, and social structures responding to one another. We recognize that worlding can never be complete, both as an ongoing experience and due to our inability to fully grasp the breadths of its many domains. In this way, worlding offers an exciting space to stretch muscles, strain our eyes, and chew on what we can fit in our mouths without choking.

The fluid to-and-fro crossings of this special issue will begin with Vanessa Fleet's account of imagined worlds as passed under Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto's lens. Considering the historical precedents and methods that shape Sugimoto's *Dioramas* project (1974), as well as the equivalence between the representational devices of the diorama and the camera, Fleet outlines the artist's offerings of imaginative substitutes for real worlds without aspiring to reality in itself.

Zachary Angles' analysis of mythic content provides a possible explanation for why young architectural designers, as explored through selected works by Bureau Spectacular, Design with Company, and MOS, are producing a series of explicit myths to sit alongside their engineered production. In staking out three types of operative myths that are authored under these firms, Angles' typological survey suggests a new metric for understanding a growing genre of contemporary architecture.

Taking up the imaginary, fantastical layers in popular media, David Hou examines the gaming phenomena of crowdsourcing, interactivity and plurality with regard to Twitch Plays Pokémon (TPP), a game that serves to demonstrate the wide-ranging narratological implications of collective play. Hou's case study allows for introspection on our own authoring, as well as video-game cultures and behaviours as conjured performance. Interspersed amongst the aforementioned contributions, our inclusion of local artist projects will include interviews with Andreas Rutkauskas and Michelle Weinstein and artistic statements from Anna Jane MacIntyre and Miles Forrester.

Thinkers working around History, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Politics and Technology question origins, borders, control, cross-contamination, and re-imaginings as a vehicle to open the investigation of worlds unseen, worlds returned to, and worlds dissolving. In taking inspiration from these discourses, we aim to treat this special issue publication as a means to both address and propose spaces of varying materiality—all of which have tangible implications.

We would like to sincerely thank our fellow AHGSA members as well as our *Imagined Worlds* presenters and moderators, all of whom went above and beyond in planning and being a part of the symposium. Furthermore, we are extremely grateful to the School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design at York University, the Art Gallery of York University, all of those who participated in our fundraising and, of course, KAPSULA.

Jen MacDonald & Stella Melchiori
Symposium Co-chairs

NOTES ON THE INDEX (after Rosalind Krauss)

Prologue

As distinct from symbols, indexes establish their meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to their referents. They are the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify. (1977)

I

They are the marks and traces, she said, the marks and traces filling space between then and now. Between having been here and being here. But "here" doesn't really mean much these days—it turns out we can be in more than one place at once. So then is now, and now is then. Or maybe they just start to look the same.

II

It seems like every time I try to index the imaginary, it gets too real. The materiality of the index, its closeness with tangible reality, has no prescribed place in the aether, the simulation, the "what if," the … And yet the index appears, insisting on its presence even in a functional absence. Representation is how we navigate our worlds, even when absence frames their existence.

Epilogue

Causality still operates in the imagination, but infinitely; and the index, compromising its relationship to the physical, keeps pointing.

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO'S MUSEUM DIORAMAS

THE RETURN OF THE REAL

VANESSA FLEET

Hiroshi Sugimoto was born in 1948 in Tokyo, Japan, and trained as a photographer at the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles, California, where he earned his BFA in 1972. In 1974 he relocated to New York, where, two years later, he began his *Dioramas* series at the Natural History Museum. Creating long exposures with a large-format R. H. Phillips and Sons 8 x 10 inch camera and printing in black and white gelatin silver prints up to 119 x 185 centimeters in size, Sugimoto captures tableaux of natural history dioramas simulating early animal, plant, and humanoid life (Kennedy 2012). Recording these imagined worlds as though they were concrete realities, Sugimoto eliminates the institutional framing devices of vitrines, proscenium edges, and didactic labeling, so that the works cannot be categorized easily as museological critique. Rather, they are reflections on time and the nature of representation itself. Removed first from life by collectors of naturalia, the taxidermied specimens—fixed in time in their "prosthetic environments"—undergo a second death-like fixity before Sugimoto's lens (Spector 2000, 17). As printed black and white pictures, they have the uncanny effect of levelling spatial discrepancies and other identifying signs of artifice from the scene, which instead appears more 'realistic' than the simulated museum display.

Sugimoto's project invites the viewer to consider the equivalence between the representational devices of the diorama and the camera: both are box-like spaces, isolated by glass, which reproduce scenes in a Classical perspective. Yet even as these pictures recapitulate a sense of realism that has been lost otherwise, the image content infuses the works with an aspect of the surreal. Viewers may glimpse two ankylosaur dinosaurs approaching a watering hole; a pair of early humanoid figures strolling against an airy, open plain; or a bloody scene where jackals, hyenas, and vultures feast on carrion in the Savannah. By eliminating the surrounding context of the museum setting from the photographic subject of the dioramas, Sugimoto exchanges the physical place in which he stood with his camera for the *imagined* space that can only exist in the photograph.

In an interview wherein he recalled his first visit to the diorama halls at New York's American Museum of Natural History, Sugimoto characterized the experience as hallucinogenic, stating, "When I saw them I felt as if I had taken drugs... Perhaps the whole world around me might be completely dead," (Kamps 2000, 40). Through images that appear to reanimate non-living museum specimens, Sugimoto calls attention to the peculiar, even macabre, human desire to remake the things of the world (Kamps 2000, 40).

This paper examines the intersecting literature

on dioramas, spectatorship, and the emergence of photographic technology, analyzing the condition of and aesthetic debates on photography within the museum context. Known for using the photographic medium to reflect on and illuminate relations between culture, history, and empiricism through conceptual suites of photographs—such as *Photogenic Drawings*, *Theatres*, and *Wax Museums*—Sugimoto's project is defined by its contemporary engagement with the nature of temporality. The artist not only represents times passed, but as he has eloquently stated, *time exposed*, offering a long look at the unfolding of history as it irrupts into the present.

In selecting museum dioramas as his subject, Sugimoto inserts his work into a long-standing historical narrative about the relationship between photography and display, and the place of photographic collections within the museum institution. As Spector notes, "It is no coincidence that the most promoted inventor of photography, Louis Daguerre, also originated the diorama in 1822, using elaborately painted backdrops, mannequins in period clothes, real props, dramatic lighting, and sound effects to create convincing, seemingly magical theatrical illusions" (Spector 2000, 17). Daguerre's painted panoramas and dioramas displayed exotic views of nature against the curved inner wall of a circular building, before which the audience would be seated on a platform that rotated between two theatrical stages. The set designer could project changing views of dramatic landscapes through the stage windows – a form of theatrical entertainment that eventually would give way to windows onto ecological theatre at natural history museums.

The invention of photography in 1839 largely replaced both painting and the theatrical diorama or panorama in their mimetic projects. Reports of Daguerre's dioramas stress not only the technical accomplishment of the scenes but also their *realism*—not so much representations of reality as *simulations* thereof: in other words, what Don Slater terms "spaces of absorbing virtuality" (Slater 1995, 218). In his essay "Photography and Modern Vision," Slater positions photography as an extension of the diorama by virtue of its illusionistic ability to translate the material world into representation—a means of knowing and transforming the world through a unified technology of vision.

Slater examines the spectator in terms of the creation of a modern audience captivated by modernity's sanctification of vision and observable truths—emblematized in what the author refers to as "spectacular science" (Slater 1995, 226). Charting the popular rise of spectacles in the Victorian age parallel to the emergence of photography, Slater identifies products of modernity's commercialized entertainments—sports, circuses, melodrama theatre, and magic shows—alongside displays of manufactured materials of the world's industries—shop displays, museums, and international exhibitions. This epistemological framework, allowing for dual projects of representation *and* simulation to coexist—as seen in the diorama—mobilized photography from a visionary source of knowledge to "an experience of vision as a cultural appropriation of modernity" (Slater 1995, 233).

Tony Kamps argues that *Dioramas* stem from the "human desire to re-create appearances" (Kamps 2000, 7). He notes: "What you see in them may be a fabrication, but it also may be the thing itself," going on to suggest that, by occupying a dual space of ontology and representation, dioramas have a unique ability to challenge human perception (Kamps 2000, 7).

They compel us to pore over their scenes, comparing their versions of reality to our own. This experience is uniquely visceral. Although almost always removed from us by their diminutive scale [or physical barriers, such as a vitrine]... dioramas activate a physical response that flat images, isolated sculptures, and even holography cannot. They engage our sense of depth perception and, with it, a bodily awareness of space, which encourages us to make

the imaginative leap into their constructs (Kamps 2000, 7).

In his consideration of the evocative potential of dioramas, Kamps invokes a type of spectatorship that can alter the fabric of experience, giving way to a new kind of collective subject. For Kamps' spectator, the mental exertion required to resolve perspectival and spatial discrepencies opens a path for a new sensory awareness, and with it a cognitive leap beyond the physical and conceptual boundaries of the world.

Nancy Spector has noted that Sugimoto gravitates toward sites "where people gather for entertainment or edification"—and in the case of the natural history museum, which is itself a tourist attraction, the subject encompasses both, with the realm of science overruling the myths and legends explored elsewhere in the artist's oeuvre (Spector 2000, 18). Even though some of the scientific theory on which dioramas are premised has since been overturned, Spector states that the "concept of truth is quite secondary to the success of the presentation since the reality it emulates is always part fantasy. In the case of dioramic imagery, fabricated in the name of science and education, the fake becomes authentic and fulfilling" (Spector 2000, 18). Yet even while Sugimoto's subject rests firmly in the realm of science, the photographs themselves are considered contemporary art. Inherent in the *Dioramas* series, then, is a tension emerging of photography's relationship to aesthetics. The debate has persisted since the medium's inception, traditionally resting upon "the distinction between artistic and scientific vision, fact and fiction, objectivity and subjectivity" (Slater 220). Artistic attempts to elevate photography from science to art have been premised on overcoming its condition of representing pure fact.

There exist multiple—and, at times, conflicting—values ascribed to photographic collections in museums. Both in art-related and non-art-related institutions, photography has served a number of functions: to document collections of objects in institutional archives, to complement existing material displays, or to substitute for primary objects too large, too far away, or too fleeting to retain within the museum. In fact, photography first entered the museum context in documentary projects similar to Sugimoto's own, when Roger Fenton was made the first official photographer of the British Museum, where he was appointed in 1854 to document its collections.

As a modern construct that aims to name, document, and display the objects of civilization, the museum space also has a *civilizing* effect upon its publics. And yet, Sugimoto describes the aesthetic impulse of his project as means of exploring "what happened before modernism, indeed, before civilization itself. It is concerned with the images of the struggle of early humans to capture words; naming matter by perceiving an image, uttering a sound, creating a word" (quoted in Bashkoff 2000, 66). The artist charts territories that pre-exist spaces of intellectual authority.

Nancy Spector writes on the serial nature of Sugimoto's photographic suites, emphasizing the Minimalist adage—*one thing after another*—which denies all relationships other than that of repetition or sequence, and uses order as an aesthetic strategy. Phrase is the single unifying principle through which she attempts to situate his oeuvre. In relation to the *Dioramas*, Spector's argument extends to the cyclical nature of the photographs' presentation and their intensely *simulated* existence as reproductions of reproductions. Using the theory of signatures to illuminate the mechanism of photography, Spector speaks to the indexicality of the medium and how visual meaning is formed by the traces of the visible world as

they are imprinted on photosensitive paper. She notes: "The 'indexical' is a process of signification in which the signifier is bound to the referent by an explicit and contiguous connection to empirical reality. An index is this the physical mark of the entity or event, which in turn becomes the sign for that entity or event" (Spector 2000, 17). Sugimoto's *Dioramas* are imprints of actual objects existing in real time and space; yet those objects in themselves are signifiers of what once existed—and now no longer do.

Hans Belting is similarly concerned with analyzing Sugimoto's works by virtue of their preoccupation with representation. Belting traces an influential link between Marcel Duchamp and Sugimoto—both artists pose the question of whether the world can be represented in images at all, and both produce art in series or sequences as a means of working through a specific idea. Echoing Spector on Sugimoto, Belting writes, "It is only the repetition of the motif that brings this idea to light. Each individual photograph is simply a variation on another and presents the motif in another state and yet in the same way" (Belting 2010, 83).

Belting argues that central to Duchamp's conceptual strategies during the height of the avant-garde was the subject of perspective and the question of science's claim to truth. He put forth and explored the concept of 'pictorial nominalism' in his art, which he described in contradictory terms. As Belting notes, a nominalism may only be located in theoretical language—that is, a language whereby "concepts pull back from references to reality and refer only to themselves" (Belting 2010, 19). Duchamp repeatedly questioned whether there could be 'pictorial concepts,' or concepts that were not already words, and whether it was even possible to produce a type of representation that was not *already* a representation of something existing in the physical world (Belting 19). How might a pictorial representation operate with signs that have no referents in sensory or verbal realms? This method of questioning is legible in Sugimoto's *Dioramas,* whose subjects are the things of the world that have been transformed into an exhibition of the world, and which have then been photographed—enacting a form of double simulation when viewed (Belting 2010, 83). At the same time, in the way they highlight the "ambiguity of actuality and appearance," Belting argues that Sugimoto's *Dioramas* also enact a double absence or effacement of the things in the world (Belting 2010, 86).

Perhaps the most important interpretation of Sugimoto's work is that which investigates the notion of temporality. In the essay, "Everything we look at is a Kind of Troy," Norman Bryson argues that if the dominant temporal action of photography has been that of capturing a distinct moment in time, then Sugimoto's oeuvre powerfully resists it, and instead finds ways to portray time that are layered and multiple, overlapping in the same place (Bryson 2000, 54). The historical object in Sugimoto's Museum Dioramas "participate[s] in two basic temporalities, its original life and its afterlife in the present, but also the sense of time that prevailed in the past differs from the sense of time we have now" (Bryson 2000, 57). Human consciousness has a greater complexity and dimensionality than what is experienced in the delimitations of linear clock time. The primordial scenes captured by Sugimoto's lens elicit an awareness in the viewer through the datedness of the artifacts from 30-50 years ago, which is superseded by a sense of geological time, pulling us backward by thousands of years at the same moment we remain firmly rooted in our present conceptual surroundings.

The temporal layering and folding that Bryson examines in Sugimoto's work finds resonance in Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real*, which argues that early avant-gardes introduced an unsettling of temporality in their order: "For even as the avant-garde recedes into the past, it also returns from the future, repositioned by innovative art in the present" (Foster 1996, x). Foster suggests that a return to avant-garde forms of art are marked by a strange effect of deferred temporality —a circling back of time on itself and on a past that was never quite present, which remains curiously ungraspable. Foster's work transposes, to some extent, Freudian theories of the repressed traumatic incident, which threatens to break through the temporal surface of the present order, always being reconstituted but never assimilated. The analogy between archaeological regression and psychoanalysis is clarified by Giorgio Agamben as a matter of "gaining access to a past that has not been lived through, and therefore that technically cannot be defined as 'past,' but that has somehow remained present" (Agamben 2009, 102). While Sugimoto's *Dioramas* do not explicitly address notions of psychoanalysis and trauma, the questions raised about our conceptions of temporality remain as relevant. The photographs' content—pre-historical life—existed long before photomechanical reproduction; the medium they explore—the diorama—pre-dates and was effectively replaced by the modern invention of the artist's medium. Sugimoto's temporal layering ultimately shatters our understanding of unified historical narratives, shedding light on the processes of rupture and discontinuity that make up history.

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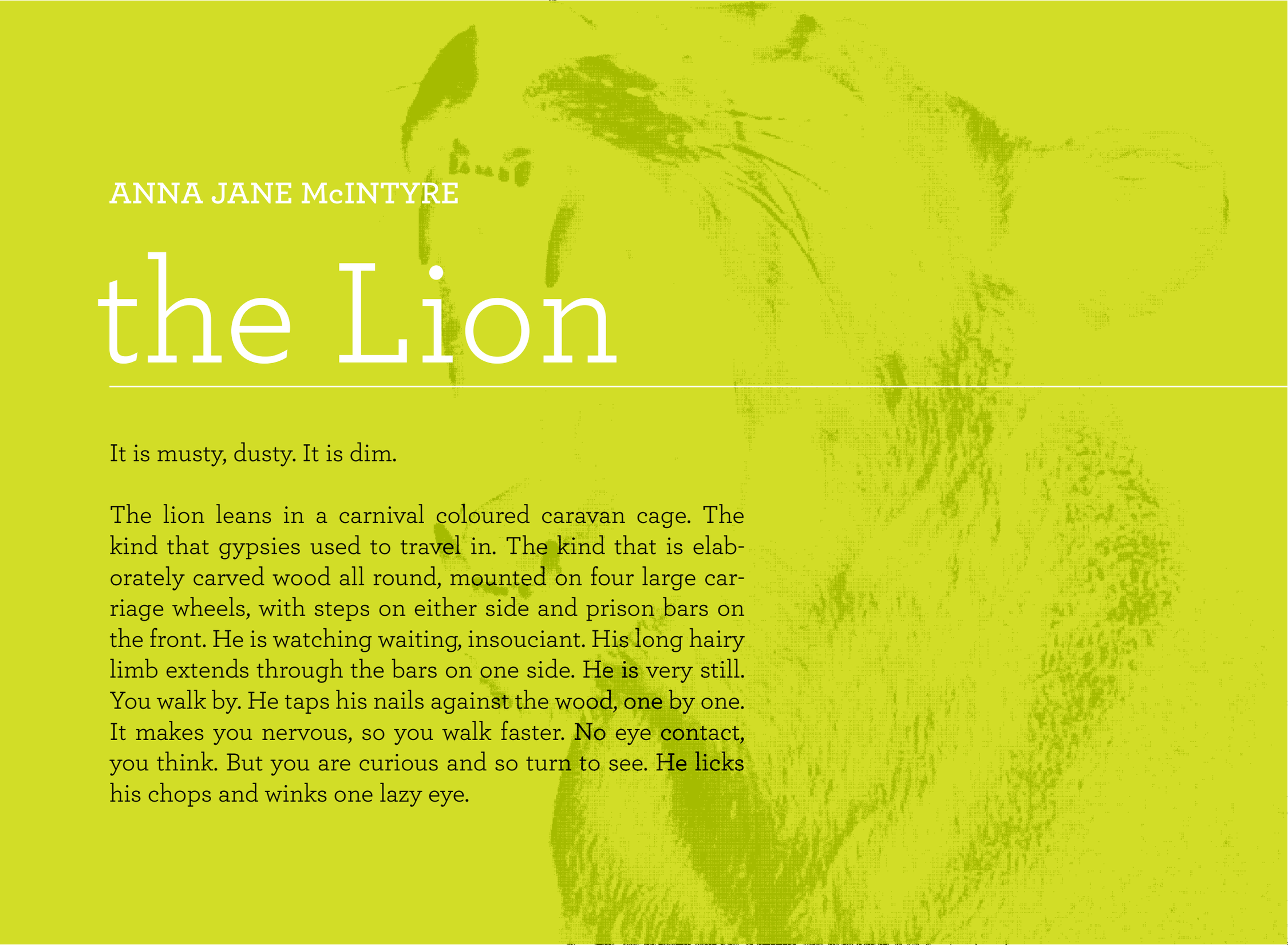
VANESSA FLEET

is a curator, educator, and photo-historian. A doctoral candidate in Art History and Visual Culture at York University, she has completed curatorial projects and research at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the University of Toronto Art Centre, and the Archive of Modern Conflict. She worked as a graduate intern in the Department of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Her research is funded by a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship.

ANNA JANE McINTYRE

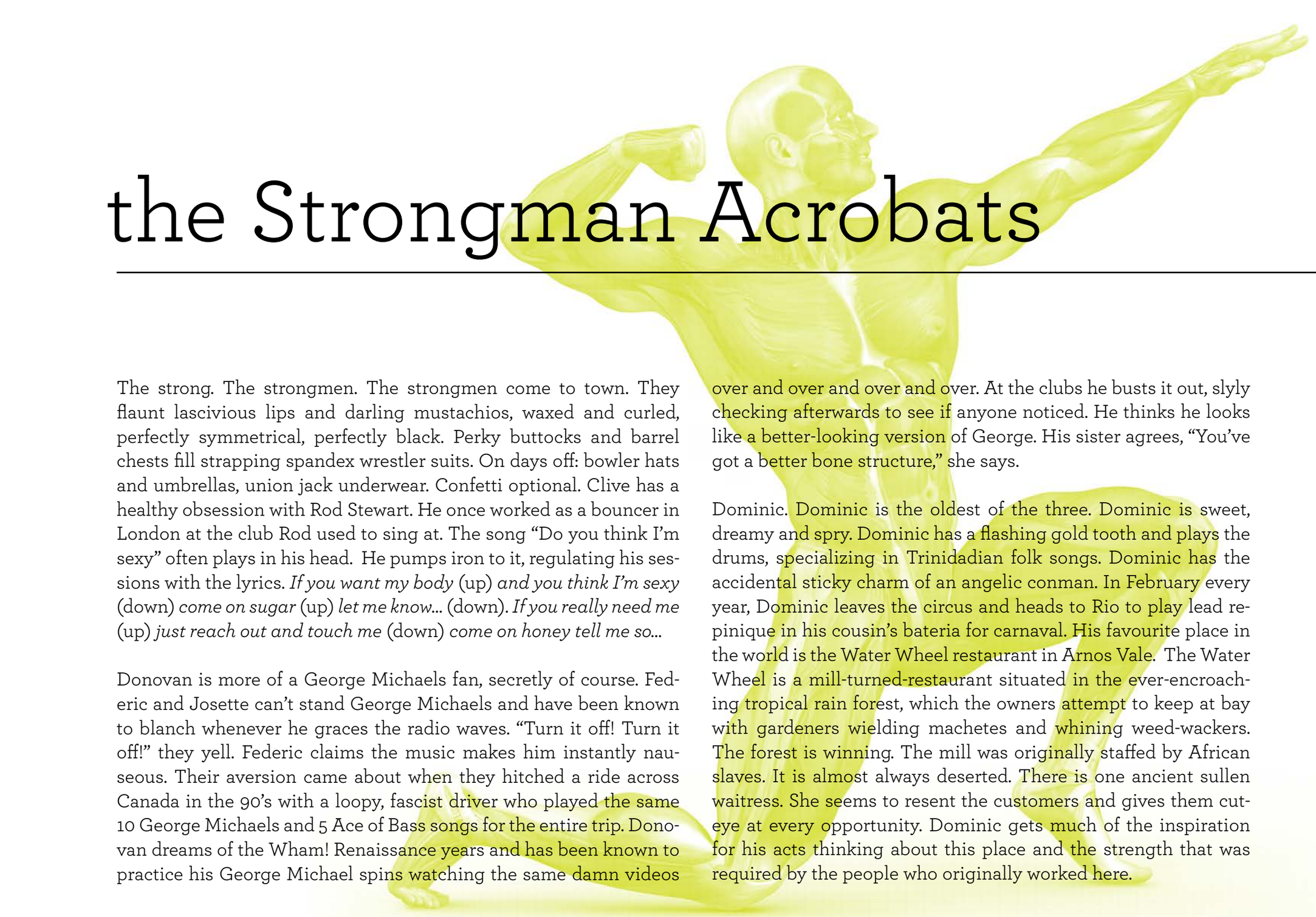
the Lion



It is musty, dusty. It is dim.

The lion leans in a carnival coloured caravan cage. The kind that gypsies used to travel in. The kind that is elaborately carved wood all round, mounted on four large carriage wheels, with steps on either side and prison bars on the front. He is watching waiting, insouciant. His long hairy limb extends through the bars on one side. He is very still. You walk by. He taps his nails against the wood, one by one. It makes you nervous, so you walk faster. No eye contact, you think. But you are curious and so turn to see. He licks his chops and winks one lazy eye.

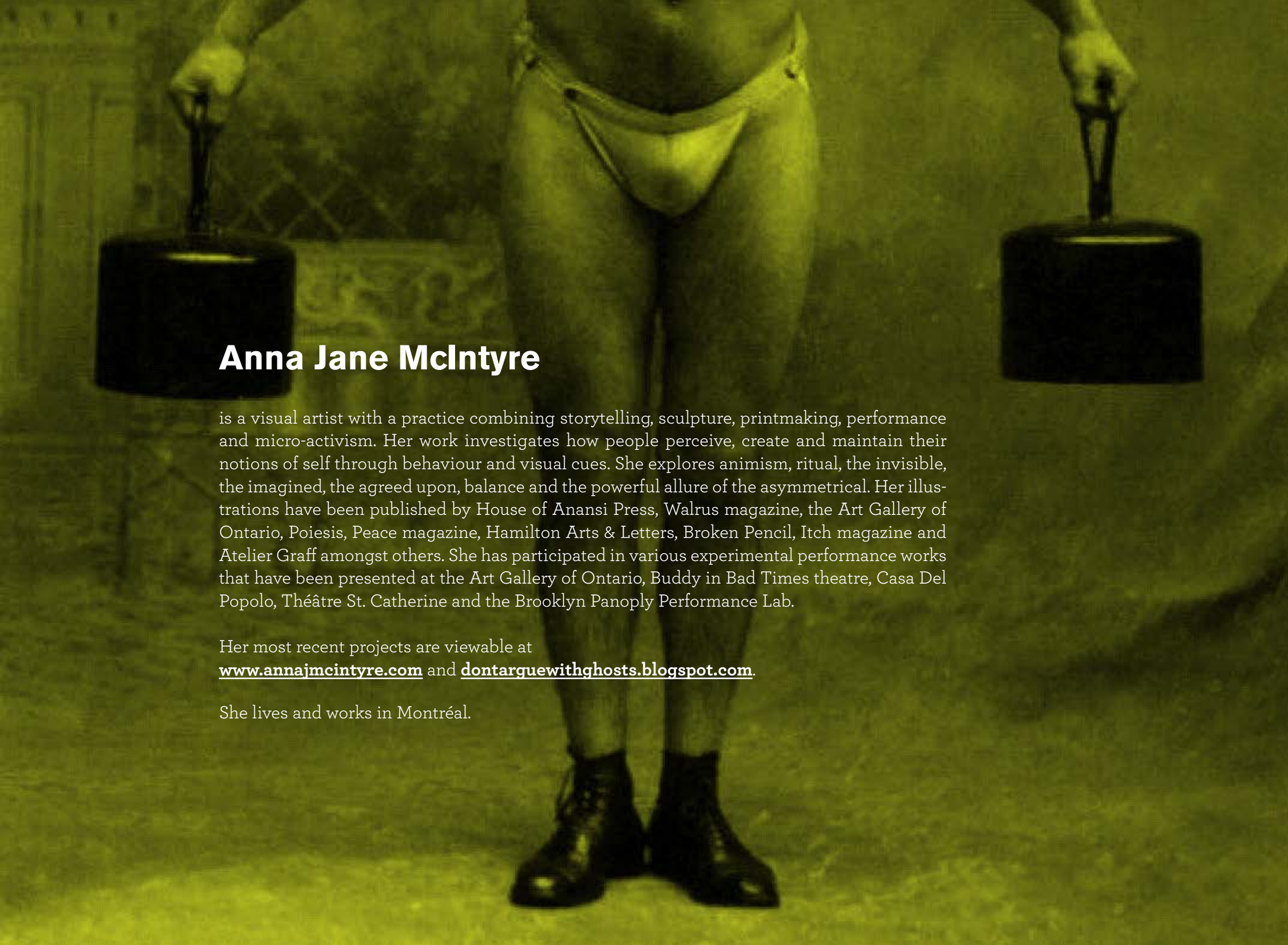
the Strongman Acrobats



The strong. The strongmen. The strongmen come to town. They flaunt lascivious lips and darling mustachios, waxed and curled, perfectly symmetrical, perfectly black. Perky buttocks and barrel chests fill strapping spandex wrestler suits. On days off: bowler hats and umbrellas, union jack underwear. Confetti optional. Clive has a healthy obsession with Rod Stewart. He once worked as a bouncer in London at the club Rod used to sing at. The song "Do you think I'm sexy" often plays in his head. He pumps iron to it, regulating his sessions with the lyrics. *If you want my body* (up) *and you think I'm sexy* (down) *come on sugar* (up) *let me know...* (down). *If you really need me* (up) *just reach out and touch me* (down) *come on honey tell me so...*

Donovan is more of a George Michaels fan, secretly of course. Federic and Josette can't stand George Michaels and have been known to blanch whenever he graces the radio waves. "Turn it off! Turn it off!" they yell. Federic claims the music makes him instantly nauseous. Their aversion came about when they hitched a ride across Canada in the 90's with a loopy, fascist driver who played the same 10 George Michaels and 5 Ace of Bass songs for the entire trip. Donovan dreams of the Wham! Renaissance years and has been known to practice his George Michael spins watching the same damn videos over and over and over and over. At the clubs he busts it out, slyly checking afterwards to see if anyone noticed. He thinks he looks like a better-looking version of George. His sister agrees, "You've got a better bone structure," she says.

Dominic. Dominic is the oldest of the three. Dominic is sweet, dreamy and spry. Dominic has a flashing gold tooth and plays the drums, specializing in Trinidadian folk songs. Dominic has the accidental sticky charm of an angelic conman. In February every year, Dominic leaves the circus and heads to Rio to play lead repinique in his cousin's bateria for carnaval. His favourite place in the world is the Water Wheel restaurant in Arnos Vale. The Water Wheel is a mill-turned-restaurant situated in the ever-encroaching tropical rain forest, which the owners attempt to keep at bay with gardeners wielding machetes and whining weed-wackers. The forest is winning. The mill was originally staffed by African slaves. It is almost always deserted. There is one ancient sullen waitress. She seems to resent the customers and gives them cut-eye at every opportunity. Dominic gets much of the inspiration for his acts thinking about this place and the strength that was required by the people who originally worked here.

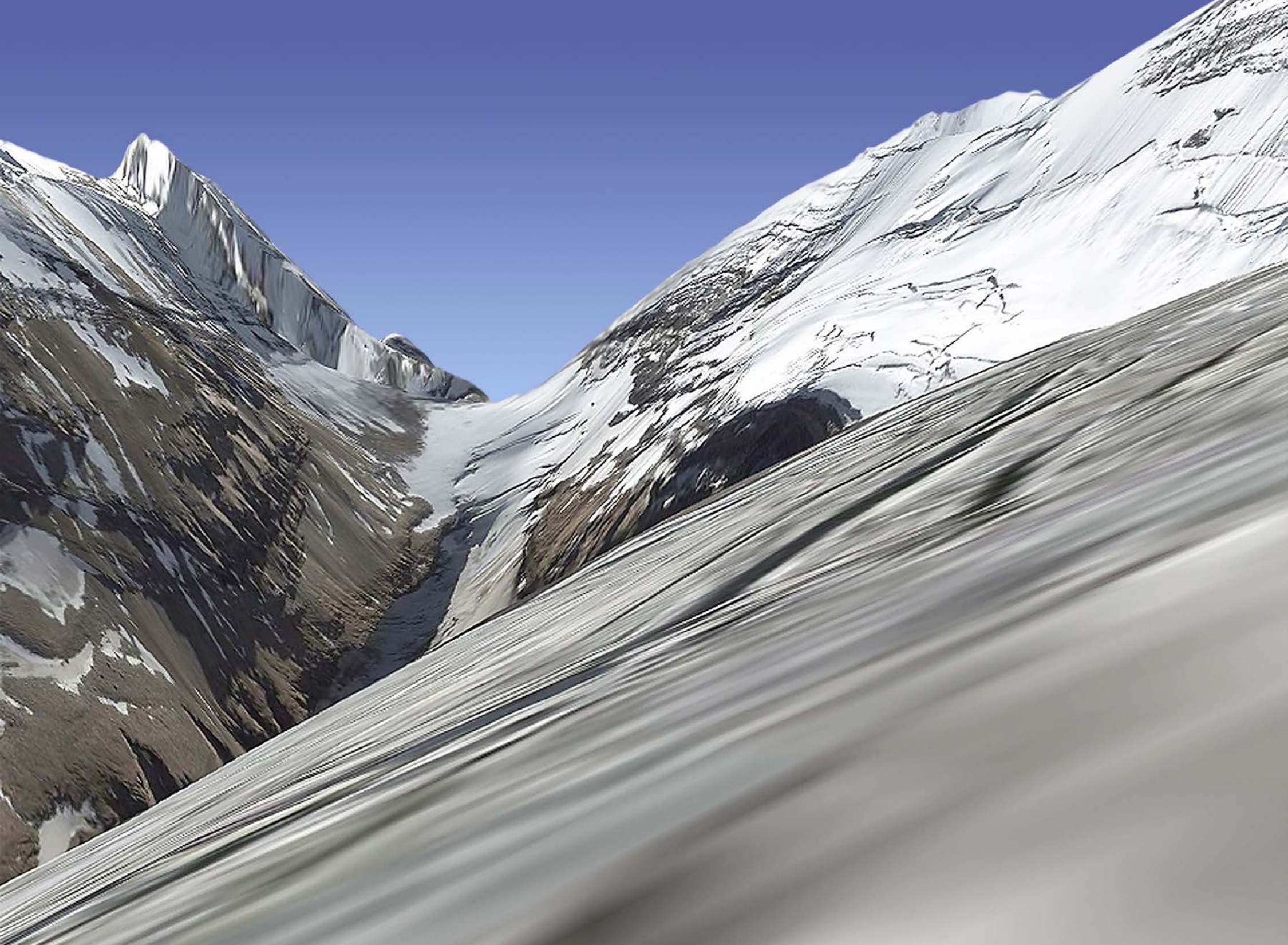


Anna Jane McIntyre

is a visual artist with a practice combining storytelling, sculpture, printmaking, performance and micro-activism. Her work investigates how people perceive, create and maintain their notions of self through behaviour and visual cues. She explores animism, ritual, the invisible, the imagined, the agreed upon, balance and the powerful allure of the asymmetrical. Her illustrations have been published by House of Anansi Press, Walrus magazine, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Poiesis, Peace magazine, Hamilton Arts & Letters, Broken Pencil, Itch magazine and Atelier Graff amongst others. She has participated in various experimental performance works that have been presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Buddy in Bad Times theatre, Casa Del Popolo, Théâtre St. Catherine and the Brooklyn Panoply Performance Lab.

Her most recent projects are viewable at
www.annajmcintyre.com and **dontarguewithghosts.blogspot.com**.

She lives and works in Montréal.



THE CYBERNETIC SUBLIME

An interview with Andreas Rutkauskas

JEN MACDONALD

Can you describe how you came to the *Virtually There* project—specifically your photos and videos?

In completing my MFA thesis at Concordia University, I exhibited a project that engaged the notion of the sublime. At the time, I was interested in directing the viewer's experience by controlling the vista—a strategy that has similarly been employed by Canadian landscape painters such as the Group of Seven. By pointing my camera in a direction to omit infrastructure and other cultural details, I could seduce the viewer into imagining a landscape of untouched wilderness.

Following the creation of this work, I spent a winter in Montreal, and longed to revisit the mountains of Western Canada. Unable to do so in real life, I turned to the software Google Earth, and began retracing my steps virtually and recomposing photographs that I had already taken within the soft-

ware. It was soon after that I conceived of my project *Virtually There*, and began to examine topographic maps, historic photographs, and download GPS tracks from an online community that spent time exploring the Rockies. I used these sources as a point of departure for the creation of images in Google Earth, which I printed as 8 x 10" references to be used in the field. I then re-enacted these virtual journeys in real life during residencies at the Gushul Studio (in the Crowsnest Pass) and at The Banff Centre, and made photographs with my own camera.

I had been thinking about the limitations of the photographic medium, since a photograph is incapable of fully representing an experience in the landscape. I began exploring other tools within Google Earth and contemplating a time based result. The first video I made is titled *Caché*, and it investigates the phenomenon of framing a view in the software, then emptying the software's image cache. When the information is downloaded again, the software remembers the user's last position, including the exact framing of the shot. Information is built up, as in a traditional landscape painting, beginning with a rough ground, and gradually increasing in detail. Since then I have used the historical imagery slider, and the software's sun tool to create videos that engage with nineteenth-century illusory techniques, including the moving panorama and the magic lantern.

You mentioned a number of the physical qualities of online cartographic apps. For instance, being able to arrange the sun's position on Google Earth plays with the tactility of physical science. It's quite a poetic online tool. We have a very particular corporeal relationship to the sun. Our ability to physically approach or manipulate the sun remains quite limited. How do you consider materiality of monumental phenomena, like the sun or mountains, in your image making?

With respect to our corporeal relationship to natural phenomena, I am reluctant to believe that any synthetic media can approach the power of firsthand experience in such instances (with an exception to be made for rare works such as Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project* at Tate Modern in 2003-04). For me, what is more pressing are the implications of technological detachment in both the real and virtual realm. It is easy to look at the diptychs in my project and point out the discrepancies between the actual and the simulation, and to comment on how the simulacrum will always fall short of its referent, but the true question is how technology is altering the way in which we experience the natural world. *Virtually There* is a response to the democratization of landscape; the history of mountaineering was written by the bourgeois, but now anyone can climb a mountain virtually. But it is paradoxically also about what stands to be lost when such a real-

istic representation of our environment can be experienced at arm's length. How many times have I heard: "I expected it to be bigger in real life"? The mediation does not stop there. In the era of the post-photographic, we cannot simply enjoy the experience, but rather we need to document our own experience, no matter how ubiquitous or generic it is.

I'm very interested in your relationship with travel, landscape, and documentation. Visually stunning vernacular travel photography has reached a new level of saturation, with image sharing social networking and technologies like Google Earth. You mentioned the notion of "democratizing the landscape," which drew me to the supposedly "democratic" space of the internet. Could you speak to questions of geo-political implications of travel, border-crossing, accessing or owning space?

I feel that an understanding of the origins of Google Earth's imagery is central to this question concerning the geo-political implications of travel and the notion of accessing or owning space. Central to Google's success is the idea that the organization appears as a benevolent provider of services, yet there is always some form of exchange of information acting as a motivator. When it comes to the Google Earth software, it is worth noting that Google does not operate any remote sensing satellites itself, rather they annex imagery made available by commercial satellite imagery companies. These companies' names appear directly in the Google Earth interface, as a form of branding. Clients, whether corporate or civilian, can commission the gathering of high resolution imagery for a given location directly through the websites of these agencies. Once imagery has been added to the repository of the satellite company, it will in turn be added to the landscape of Google Earth. Sometimes the name of the agency that commissioned the data will also appear, next to the satellite company, so the next time you take a virtual journey in Google Earth, look for satellite companies such as Landsat and Spot, paired with Astrium (a subsidiary of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company) or the U.S. Navy as the commissioners of data. The democracy of the landscape comes at a cost, since a good deal of imagery is commissioned by industries for the exploration of resources including forestry, oil, gas, and water. To a degree, these corporations already 'own' the virtual space, and the Google Earth user merely accesses that space temporarily, much like a hiker is allowed to pass through the landscape of Banff National Park, but is not allowed to build a permanent structure. The virtual hiker will pass through the landscape, but the corporation will have a pronounced impact on the physical environment.

The title, Virtually There, definitely reflects

our proximity to online virtual space—but it also sounds like the last bit of motivation a tired hiker might need to reach their final destination, as in: "Come on, we're virtually there." Is there something in your work looking forward to something that is coming?

I have been given the opportunity to reinvent the project a number of times, for example, whenever I exhibit the work, I try and find ways to add new images or video to the presentation. While I continue to look to the past in order to contextualize our current interests, the technology is changing as well. The resolution of the available imagery has increased significantly since I captured the original images in 2009-10. As computer processors continue to become more powerful, and the technology more portable and integrated, there is an increasing desire for more realistic representations of the world. Platforms such as Second Life, or video games such as Minecraft or Grand Theft Auto offer the possibility of going anywhere and doing anything virtually, rather than being bound by linear narratives. Perhaps in the future there will be a coming together of these two inclinations within virtual globe software. One step in this direction, for example, is how users can already contribute their own 3D models of buildings to Google Earth by using **SketchUp**.

I think there is an interesting tension in the materiality of your photographs and virtual spaces like Minecraft. This work exists in varying forms (photos, mark-making, text and video) but I was wondering if you could speak to how you conceive of the piece as an online document (i.e. videos accessible on Vimeo) and as an installation in galleries. How do you feel about the work as both tangible and virtual materials? How do you feel they are received by an audience in those contexts?

Witnessing this work in a material context is especially important for a number of reasons. The photographs are all chromogenic prints, meaning that they are traditional chemical prints. The image is embedded in the print, rather than sitting on top of the surface like an inkjet print. I enjoy the convergence of analogue and digital materials, therefore I shot the real world photographs with a film camera, scanned and edited the negatives digitally, and printed them using a digital LED printer. The printer is crucial for the Google Earth images, since the files are low resolution. The printer has a built-in upsampling process that reduces artifacts as it resizes the print. This upsampling combined with the analogue process gives these artificial images a decidedly photographic feel.

I am currently in the process of building on to the project, which involves breaking with the exclusive creation of diptychs and allowing certain images to exist as a purely virtual or an entirely real life view. These monocular views will be carefully selected because they reveal something about the other realm; for example, geological erosion begins to resemble a digital artifact, or a variation in the resolution of satellite imagery suggests a change in depth of field.

ANDREAS RUTKAUSKAS

is a Montreal based maker, who uses photography, video, and cartography to explore the relationship between landscape and technology. Previous photo projects explore the socio-economic conditions of rural and suburban communities across Canada, and the geological implications of a shifting labor market. Rutkauskas' most recent project, *Virtually There*, uses in-person digital photography and screen capture on Google Earth to capture identical vantage points of the mountains in Western Canada. These images have since been translated into a book of geographic coordinates, maps, and videos, forming a complex body of relations to physical and virtual landscapes.

JEN MACDONALD

is a thinker, writer and maker based in Toronto. She is currently a graduate student at York University studying Art History with a specialty in Contemporary Canadian. Jen has worked in geriatrics, community based organizations, and most recently completed an internship with Mammalian Diving Reflex. Her writing has been featured in *Drain Magazine* and *MusicWorks Magazine*.

META-NARRATIVE IN TWITCH PLAYS POKÉMON

The Formation of the Collective Second Person

DAVID HOU

Narrative formation is a crucial part of gaming, and the construction of an effective story world is paramount in drawing in and retaining player interest. Yet the earliest games, such as *Pong* (1972), *Space Invaders* (1978), *Asteroids* (1979), etc. had no recognizable story. There was no narrative at all: no explanation of why aliens were invading Earth or why the player appeared as a spaceship floating in a vacuum while navigating a treacherous asteroid field. It seems strange to think that these questions were never answered, though truthfully, there was no need to answer them. People were content to play just for the novelty of using an interactive avatar at all. As technology advanced, stories became possible and, eventually, necessary. First with guidebooks, then with cut scenes, stories became integrated into games and gaming. The evolution of game narratives has curiously mimicked the evolution of literary history, with many of the same explorations in style and content. This is no coincidence because, as Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman explain in their seminal book on game design, "representations in games do not exist in isolation from the rest of culture[;] they rely on conventions drawn from narrative genres in other media" (Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 25). Indeed, they may even be considered "a textual medium of a new order" (Bolter 1991, 162). This in turn allows for the examination of video game narratives through liter-

ary criticism. However, games are unique in their ability to offer a cooperative experience. The interactivity of games aside, with the advent of the internet, it is now possible to design a game in which many people share a single world. The effects of this plurality on the narrative structure of games are profound and one game in particular, TwitchPlaysPokémon (TPP), serves to demonstrate the wide-ranging narratological implications of collective play. I argue that TPP is a self-induced narrative wherein the protagonist is also the author, a classic case of second-person narration. But what happens when there is more than one protagonist/author?[1] I propose that TPP exemplifies a new narrative mode, one in which "we" tell "our" story to ourselves: the collective second person. This necessarily involves the formation of a meta-narrative which operates outside of, yet is influenced by, the game narrative. Meta-narratives function as another level of story immersion, one that is even more effective due to its self-induced nature. This meta-narrative also crucially disrupts the traditional game narrative by imposing a diegetic meta-narrative on the predominantly mimetic game narrative.

The foundational game narrative under consideration is the *Pokémon* game series, first released in 1996, which formed a part of the cultural landscape of that era. On Feb. 12, 2014, an anonymous programmer began a live stream of *Pokémon Red* on the popular live-streaming website Twitch. Unique about this stream was that *the viewers* were the ones who were playing the game. The programmer had hacked a version of Pokémon Red and designed a system to allow viewers to play the game by typing commands in the chat system of the site. The simple control scheme of the game facilitated progression, with users being able to type directional inputs, "A," "B," "select," and "start" to control the character. The game became unexpectedly popular, with Twitch estimating peak simultaneous participation at around 121,000 with a total of over 55 million views. The stream broke records and attracted widespread media attention.[2] Beaten after more than 16 days of uninterrupted gameplay, the success of the first game propelled the creator to visit a game from each of the subsequent generations of Pokémon games, albeit with fewer viewers each time. However, what is of interest here is not the technological aspect of collective play, but rather the effects of this new type of gaming.

Watching the TPP stream is difficult. (fig. A) The massive influx of commands and the stream delay between input and output makes Red, the eponymous protagonist, stumble aimlessly through the world. The chaotic nature of the controls, in addition to the amount of deliberately obstructing viewers, hinders progression and frustrates both viewers and players. Yet players and viewers continued to participate, and the answer to this seeming contradiction lies in the meta-narratives that the community generated. The Pokémon games already have a story—it is the journey of a young trainer working his/her way to the top of the Pokémon world, a clear, linear progression—but in the harsh chaotic conditions of the twitch stream, that core narrative is stymied. In the context of the game narrative, it does not make sense for Red to encounter problems exiting rooms, navigating elevators, or accessing the PC. This inconsistency between the expected narrative and the narrative that unfolds requires explanation, and it is in the meta-narrative where explanations are possible. I assert that these meta-narratives naturally arise whenever the original narrative becomes incompatible with the observed reality. Random actions have motivations assigned to them from the perspective of the players for the benefit of the players themselves, so that they may continue inhabiting that narrative world. Thus, the story of TPP became one of struggle, and the meta-narrative that developed from the chat system on the Twitch stream reflects this chimeric nature. Interestingly, the community seems actively aware of their own contributions to both the meta-narrative and the game narrative. Their self-reflexivity is shown in how they cast themselves into the meta-narrative: they are "the Voices" inside Red's mind who guide him (Dijeau 2014). This particular description of the role acknowledges the gamers' simultaneous plurality and singularity. Plurality is evidenced by the conjugation of the noun, indicating an awareness that there is not just one voice guiding Red, but it also signals that there is a cohesion to the narrative voices.[3]

This study will examine two primary texts which emerged from the playthrough, collaboratively written and passed by the TPP community. Published online, mainly for the community as a means to understand the greater narrative, the self-assigned categorizations of these two texts are elements for consideration. Johansen Quijano's *Twitch Plays Pokémon: The First Novel* is explicit about the extent of its textual authority, with Quijano stating that his work is "an interpretation of the TPP mythology... with some authorial licenses" (Quijano 2014). Even the naming of his

text as a 'novel' places it firmly within the realm of fiction. However, *The Book of Helix, The Kanto Testament* by Audrey Dijeau presents itself as the biblical authority of the TPP meta-narrative.[4] The prose is simple, taking stylistic inspiration from the Christian Bible, and is largely accepted as the narrative of TPP.[5] The textual authority of Dijeau's text is never stated, though both the stylistic and taxonomic elements of the text lend it some measure of authority. The human need for a cohesive narrative played a role in the creation of these texts as a way to understand the inscrutable chaos (Price 1985, 4). The very first Pokémon ever received (a Charmander) was nonsensically nicknamed "ABBBBBK" through the uncoordinated input of the viewers; almost immediately, the community called the starter Pokémon "Abby". Here is a very clear example of the delineation between the game narrative and the meta-narrative around it: within the game, Red's Charmander is nicknamed "ABBBBBK", but in the community of the players controlling Red, Charmander's name is "Abby" (Dijeau 2014, 5). Other examples include a Rattata nicknamed "JLVWNNOOOO" which soon became "Jay Leno" (Dijeau 2014, 6), and an Oddish nicknamed "x(araggbaj" which transformed into "Cabbage" (Quijano 2014, 53). Other meta-narrative assigned nicknames arose during the course of the playthrough rather than during acquisition; and these delayed meta-nicknames would often reference some aspect of their role outside of the actual game.[6] Aside from the quirks of naming conventions in and outside of the game, the meta-narrative of TPP can be broken down into two broad components: religion and politics. These two categories showcase the exact mechanisms through which the game narrative and the meta-narrative continuously interact with each other.

The largest of the religious discourses that grew out of TPP was the division between the followers of the Helix and followers of the Dome. The cause for this division comes from one of the first choices that the game forces its players to make—the selection of a fossil reward at Mt. Moon. The selection of the Helix fossil over the Dome fossil, though accidental at the time, became the basis of the dominant religion within the community of TPP. Arising from the coincidental and frequent checking of the Helix fossil[7], the community began to jokingly assign importance to this action, which evolved into a tradition of "consulting the Helix" before performing any major action. The initial conditions which lead to the frequent, unplanned examinations of the item were the product of sheer chance, as the massive influx of uncoordinated inputs rarely allow for such delicate actions. However, with the establishment of this tradition within the meta-narrative, the player base would go on, or at least attempt, to consciously consult the Helix fossil in their bag. The meta-narrative here exerts a power to influence the trajectory of the game narrative. The Helix "religion" eventually gained enough traction to assert itself as the dominant narratological framework of the overarching meta-narrative of TPP. "Bird Jesus" the Pidgeot was commonly appropriated as the Messiah figure for the Helix religion, and its ability to convincingly win battles was seen as an extension of the power of the Helix fossil itself.[8] The conflict between the followers of the Helix and followers of the Dome in turn produced a greater interest in the game itself. In the formation of this religious conflict, hindering actions in the game narrative now had a perceived source in the meta-narrative. All subsequent events in the playthrough became tinted through the lens of this religious dichotomy, and this examination of the TPP religion is integral to understanding the complex interchange between the game narrative and the meta-narrative. The Helix/Dome dichotomy allowed players to better understand and cope with the erratic game narrative, which was a consequence of the chaotic control scheme. The anarchic control scheme leads to the other half of the meta-narrative of TPP. In addition to the religious evolution of TPP, a political system also arose. Focused not on explanations of the game narrative, the rise of the Democracy/Anarchy split was purely concerned with the meta-narrative of the community. After the unintentional release of two high level Pokémon and the inability to navigate a complicated maze portion of the game, the programmer implemented a system called 'Democracy' as opposed to the original system of 'Anarchy'. Anarchy works as the game had always operated, with every single input from the viewers being performed in sequence. Democracy instead only inputs the most submitted move within a certain timeframe. Under Democracy, each individual action takes longer, but progression becomes easier. There was, however, a harsh backlash against the institution of this new system. Players saw the Democracy system as being wholly in opposition to the point of the playthrough—the ability of an uncoordinated hive mind to complete a straightforward task. The backlash against it was enough to stop Democracy from ever becoming the norm.[9] Crucially, the objection to Democracy must be

seen as an objection to the destruction of the meta-narrative. With Democracy comes efficiency and progress, and under it, the game narrative would unfold as expediently as possible; but because the meta-narrative of TPP depends on the struggle of progression, Democracy would mean the death of that story. This fierce opposition to order must be seen as a strong reluctance to let go of the meta-narrative.

Considering the appeal of the meta-narrative, the players' concern with Democracy is not without cause. The narrative formed from the actions of the players illustrates a new mode of gaming. The game itself is so bland and inscrutable—the chaotic nature of the control method ensures that any viewer would be bored after a series of repetitive, non-consequential actions—that the viewers *must* then develop incentives for moving forward. When players go outside of the prescribed game narrative, which they inevitably do, they add their own dimension to the story. Thus, Pidgeot is no longer just a Pokémon to be used to defeat other trainers; it is "Bird Jesus," the champion of the Helix. The community's need for a narrative to engage themselves, to explain why Red slams into the wall four times and constantly examines a fossil, results in the creation of an extra narrative outside of the game. Let us now consider the nature of that narration. It is not strictly first person, because none of the individual viewers would consider themselves to be Red, nor is it strictly third person, because each viewer understands that they do contribute to Red's game narrative. Gretchen Papazian proposes that the relationship between the player and the game narration in RPG games, such as Pokémon, is an example of "fourth-person point of view" (Papazian 2010, 452). She argues for the categorization, writing that "it harks of other fourths, including the grammatical fourth person 'we' [...] the fourth dimension of science [...] the fourth wall of drama" (Papazian 2010, 454). Papazian's position is well suited for her particular analysis of the games, but seems incompatible with this particular narrative. Setting aside the ambiguity of the grammatical fourth person, her assertion about time disruption in an RPG is characteristic of a pre-existing narrative voice – the second person. In TPP, the live action and ongoing creation of the meta-narrative in the same chat that issues commands to Red presents the closest opportunity for the player to occupy the same narrative present as their game avatar. This collapse of the temporal distance between narrator and narratee is crucial to Brian Richardson's conception of Standard Form, where he describes second person narration as "a story [...] told, usually in the present tense, about a single protagonist who is referred to in the second person; the 'you' also designates the narrator and the narratee as well" (Richardson 2006, 20). When considering the primary texts[10], it is imperative to remember that the meta-narrative is derived from the twitch chat as the game is being played, and that subsequent texts are only the compilation of those narratives. Papazian's analysis of the player experience breaking the fourth wall and "collapsing the narrator-narratee relationship" is also an established characteristic of the second person point of view (Papazian 2010, 454)—a realization of Rolf Reitan's idea that "'the pronoun of address' not only invites the reader to listen to and 'witness' the events, but also lures him or her to slip into the position of the protagonist (i.e. the double address function)—and even perhaps into the position of the addressing voice itself" (Reitan 2011, 150). Even the act of issuing commands to the game character links to the imperative form, and in directing Red, the players are in turn directing themselves inside the narrative world. The narrative mode thus appears to be closely aligned with the second person point of view. Due to the interactive nature of games, the viewer/players all bear witness to the events and all take the position of the protagonist in TPP. The assumption of identity as the avatar in gaming contributes directly to this interpretation of second person narration, and James Paul Gee asserts that a "'player as virtual character'... transcends identification with characters in novels or movies, for instance, because it is both active (the player actively does things) and reflexive" (Gee 2003, 58). His model of the tripartite player identity echoes much of the same characteristics as second person narration. Although Papazian acknowledges the similarities in style, she notes an irreconcilable difference—the "disintegration of the boundary between narrator and narratee... in which the narratee becomes as central to the storytelling as the narrator" (Papazian 2010, 454). Yet her objection finds opposition in previous scholarship on second-person narration, with the conflation of narrator/narratee being acknowledged by Richardson as "autotelic" (Richardson 2006, 30) or by Dennis Schofield as "homodiegetic" (Schofield 1998, 166). The fourth person point of view has also been applied by Chris Milando to describe the TPP narrative in particular, though his definition of the fourth person is linked to the "human-computer symbiote" which arises from the link between the narrative community and the

game avatar (Milando 2014). While his analysis of the relationship between the narrator and narratee in this instance is well formed, his choice of nomenclature unfortunately clashes with pre-existing notions of fourth person narration.

There is, however, some validity in Papazian's description of the RPG narrative as "not quite second person" (Papazian 2010, 454). I propose that the difference in this scenario lies not in the position of the narrator/narratee, but rather in the multitudinous nature of that figure. Here we run into a problem, because the second person, as Richardson lays out in his Standard Form, refers to a single protagonist—but the scope of TwitchPlaysPokémon is far greater (Richardson 2006, 20). The entirety of the meta-narrative is dependent on the *collective* narrator. It is clear that categorizing this as merely the second person is insufficient. The meta-narrative of TPP ascribes to a standard second-person narrative, albeit with more people. It seems both intuitive and convenient, then, to simply denote this as an example of *the collective second person.*[11] I use this new designation simply to mark the difference in narratological structures brought on by the simultaneous activity of more than one narrator/narratee conflation within a single narrative. As with the traditional second-person point of view, the narrative takes place within the present and breaks down the gap between the narrator and the narratee, but becomes, by virtue of plurality, a destabilized narrative. The narrative focus is also decentered by the existence of a non-singular narrator, despite a shared focal point in the narratee. This phenomenon is not only limited to the meta-narrative of TPP, but can be seen in many gaming narratives that have an online component. Although TPP contains, for now, the most definitive (or public) case of multiple narrators sharing a single narratee, any game world in which multiple players share a single world can be interpreted as an example of the collective second person. The crucial element to this is the shared consequences of a single narrative storyworld. Whereas games have historically been a solitary activity, with the extent of the narrative world limited to the specific copy of the game purchased (a specific text of game narration), advancements in game technology have brought online play into the mainstream. The conditions of TPP are unique in the players' sharing of a narratee, but the effects of this narrative experiment may be further extended as the sharing of 'narrative consequence'. In the interconnected narrative story worlds of online gaming, the effects of any single narrator/player's actions will necessarily influence the narratives of other narrators/players inhabiting that world. It requires narrative revision and adaptation from the other narrators/players so that the global story world still makes sense. The existence of the collective second person point of view necessitates a deviation from traditional analytical frameworks.

The advent of a narrative point of view that is both non-singular and objective requires much further study.[12] The effect of having the diegetic center shift to this amalgamate narrating collective is a loss of any center at all; there is no longer a locus of meaning, there are instead many fragmented loci. The unusual narrative aspects of TPP may well be considered an example of Jay David Bolter's "fourth great technique of writing that will take its place beside the ancient papyrus roll, the medieval codex, and the printed book" (Bolter 1991, 162). In this sense, the nicknames can be seen as a microcosm of the entire TPP narrative: the projection of "Abby" onto "ABBBBBK" is the projection of an additional layer of narrative reality over the pre-existing narrative reality of the game world. The difficulties that arise in analyzing this narrative structure are significant because video game narratives seem to trace the history of literary narratives, but on an accelerated scale. If the game narrative has finally caught up with the literary, what does the emergence of a new narrative mode in gaming mean for literature? While the circumstances which led to the formation of the narrative framework in Twitch Plays Pokémon are quite unique, the effects on narratology, especially in regards to shared narrative consequence, can be found in an increasing number of gaming narratives. The implications of the collective second person gesture towards the shift away from any single diegetic source and the growing necessity to consider the wider narrative community in gaming design.

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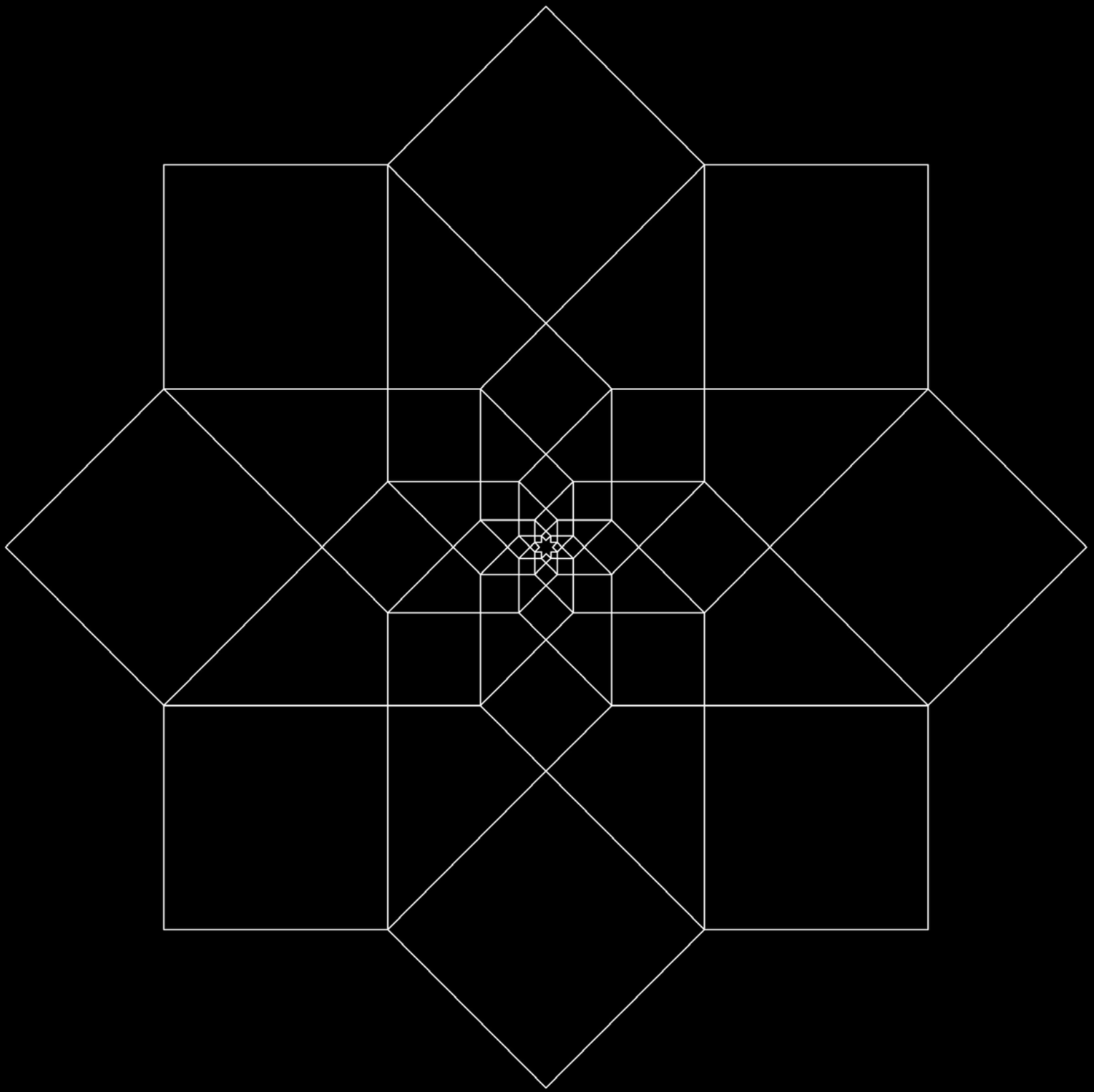

THE SPACE BETWEEN, REAL AND IMAGINED

Notes on *Fourth* and *Mars Pamphleteer* by Michelle Weinstein

STELLA MELCHIORI

The following is a translation of my conversation with Michelle Weinstein regarding her two works, *Fourth* and *Mars Pamphleteer*, both of which were featured at the 2015 York University *Imagined Worlds* Symposium:

The process of our imaginings—wherein objects and events become de-territorialized from physical space and enter a nonmaterial realm, easily shared among communities of interest and yet able to transform individual experience—is at the center of Michelle Weinstein's art practice. Given her affinity for nature and the experience of geological time apart from human scale, Weinstein's interest in the dichotomy of real/unreal began with her contemplations of history as a natural process with an innate life cycle, constantly crystallizing, sprouting, transforming into new and un-rooted domains.

The past six years of Weinstein's art-making trajectory has held imaginary spaces as its focus, with the artist frequently finding herself sifting through various levels and distortions of perception in order to create something edited and unique. *Fourth*, an ongoing project which began in 2010, is comprised of a series of paintings and small objects that are meant to incite and aid the imagination in the conception of four-dimensional space, seeing that there is no way to travel to or perceive of this space in a physical sense. After Weinstein's mother died in 2009, she experienced a surge of intense dreams about the gaps just beyond/between/outside of/within three-dimensional worlds. Shortly after, she came across *The Fourth Dimension* (1984) by Rudy Rucker, a popular science text that explicitly speaks to the visualization of "switching sides" and moving through the fourth. This book would eventually serve as the bipartite theoretical framework of *Fourth*, in that it introduced Weinstein to both Alicia Boole Stott (1860-1940) and Charles Hinton (1853-1907), two nineteenth century mathematicians who spent their life's work "picturing" 4D space.

Alicia Boole Stott successfully envisioned and constructed four-dimensional shapes within three-dimensional space through an extraordinary series of drawings and paper models that have since been proven accurate, effectively exercising her faculties of vision and abstraction so as to conceive of the unimaginable. Charles Hinton, who was actually Boole Stott's brother-in-law, is known for his invention of a system of cubes (with each side, edge and point containing a different color), created as a memorization guide to "cubic training." This process of recall would determine if an individual was able to access a four-dimensional cube or *tesseract*, a term that Hinton coined, in their mind. Hinton's findings also reference the potential spiritual and occult repercussions of visualizing four-dimensional

geometry, which include: etheric bodies, time travel, and madness--rumours have subsequently arisen that claim these cubes drove more than one person insane. The titles of the paintings in *Fourth* are all pulled from Hinton's cube system and specifically reference the tesseract's varying planes/edges/points and colours.

In her examination of a type of phenomenology intertwined with ideas of four-dimensional space, Weinstein was naturally drawn to this era in the history of mathematics, wherein abstraction and the occult were seen as seamless and the visualization of the "impossible to imagine" was cultivated. By afixing her project on the work of mathematicians, rather than art-historical permutations of abstraction fused with spirituality (of which she cites Wassily Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter), Weinstein was able to identify the core of her interests: the visualization and self-actualization of unknown space.

Fourth's conceptual basis in the internal building of a tesseract requires that each piece in the series act as a cog that relates to its counterpoint in a fundamental, potentially causal way. Originally, these paintings were composed of black and white patterns, with one or two coloured sections that elicited transference to a new space. Gradually, as Weinstein became more captivated by the way colour occupies space, she began manipulating this element of her work as concisely as possible, coordinating each gradation with the shifting expanses of both horizontal and vertical lines. According to Weinstein, one of the characteristics that we perceive of a four-dimensional shape is that, within a 3D world, it would maintain the appearance of constant motion. In keeping with this, *Fourth*'s hyperconscious colours and stripes simultaneously create and dissolve space, rendering a visual motion, or motion-in-stillness. Weinstein's hope for the series is that "from looking at one painting to the next, one could imagine the transformations and convolutions through inconceivable space that would in turn, create the next shape. This could live in the mind as a spatial version of the afterimage."

In the summer of 2014, *Mars Pamphleteer* shifted Weinstein's project away from mathematical conceptions of the imaginary towards a more narrativized vision of the mechanisms of perception. The premise of the stop-motion animation, *Mars Pamphleteer*, is a faked Mars landing documented within the artist's studio. Weinstein's utilization of stop-motion emphasizes a sense of the real, an index to the existing world outside in that she minimally alters the animated frames, which are composed of analog, still photographs strung together as sliced moments of time. This method of construction plays into the idea that initially propelled *Mars Pamphleteer*—the creation of an overtly staged scene that possesses instances of uncanny reality. The backdrop and scene set-ups of

Mars Pamphleteer are handmade, the apparatus of stop-motion remains hidden, and a jolting rhythm is embraced; yet the linking together of these planes of time give the scenes strange life.

Weinstein first learned stop-motion animation at Automata, an alternative space in Los Angeles "dedicated to the creation, incubation, and presentation of experimental puppet theater, experimental film, and other contemporary art practices centered on ideas of artifice and performing objects" (Automata, 2015). After working on *Fourth*, she sought out a process that would allow her to show motion-through-time and feel a sense of control over the staggering of sequential images. The medium of stop-motion has changed Weinstein's practice in surprising ways—loosening the grip of art history, particularly painting, on her output and allowing for contingencies to become the motor for a completed work, rather than discarded along the way. The artist's brand of stop-motion, which she describes as more related to collage than to animation, is therein able to hover in-between states, triggering the kind of overriding or unexpected factors that Weinstein relishes.

Influenced by YouTube conspiracy theory videos, faked alien sighting photographs, and B-movies, *Mars Pamphleteer* incorporates many pop culture clichés and craft forms (papier-mâché, repurposed vases, children's toys, etc.) Low production value is highly prized. Weinstein aimed to achieve a quality of motion, created through the stop-motion process (a sort of lo-fi motion), that would mesh well with the lo-fi objects and the general jury-rigged atmosphere of the piece, with this consistency creating a sense of reality. She goes on to explain, "In the end, I think there is something about the images sent from space, and also the style of the real rovers and equipment, that has an ad hoc, Tonka toy quality. I am not sure if this is due to the lack of scale in the images, or how clumsy the equipment is allowed to look because it is not necessary to market it in the slick way demanded of consumer products. At any rate, whatever the unifying cause, I was surprised that some scenes in *Mars Pamphleteer* seem less fake because the real footage from Mars seems MORE fake, more unreal." With rapidly changing digital technologies altogether redetermining our notion of original or authentic experience, *Mars Pamphleteer* sets out to explore a shifting sense of what is—or is not—real, all the while pondering the consequences of not understanding the difference.

Somewhere between imagined worlds and imagined spaces, *Mars Pamphleteer*

and *Fourth* function as translative tools, with the first referencing images of Mars in conjunction with the fact that they are composed conversions of vibrations and chemical analyses picked up by rovers, and the latter attempting to make concrete the abstract concept of the 4D. Both projects reflect a process of piecing together variables whilst shaping the narrative, and even perceptions, of what lies beyond our immediate faculties. In doing so, Michelle Weinstein asks her viewers to examine more deeply the often-felt impulse to accept presented facts and images at face value.

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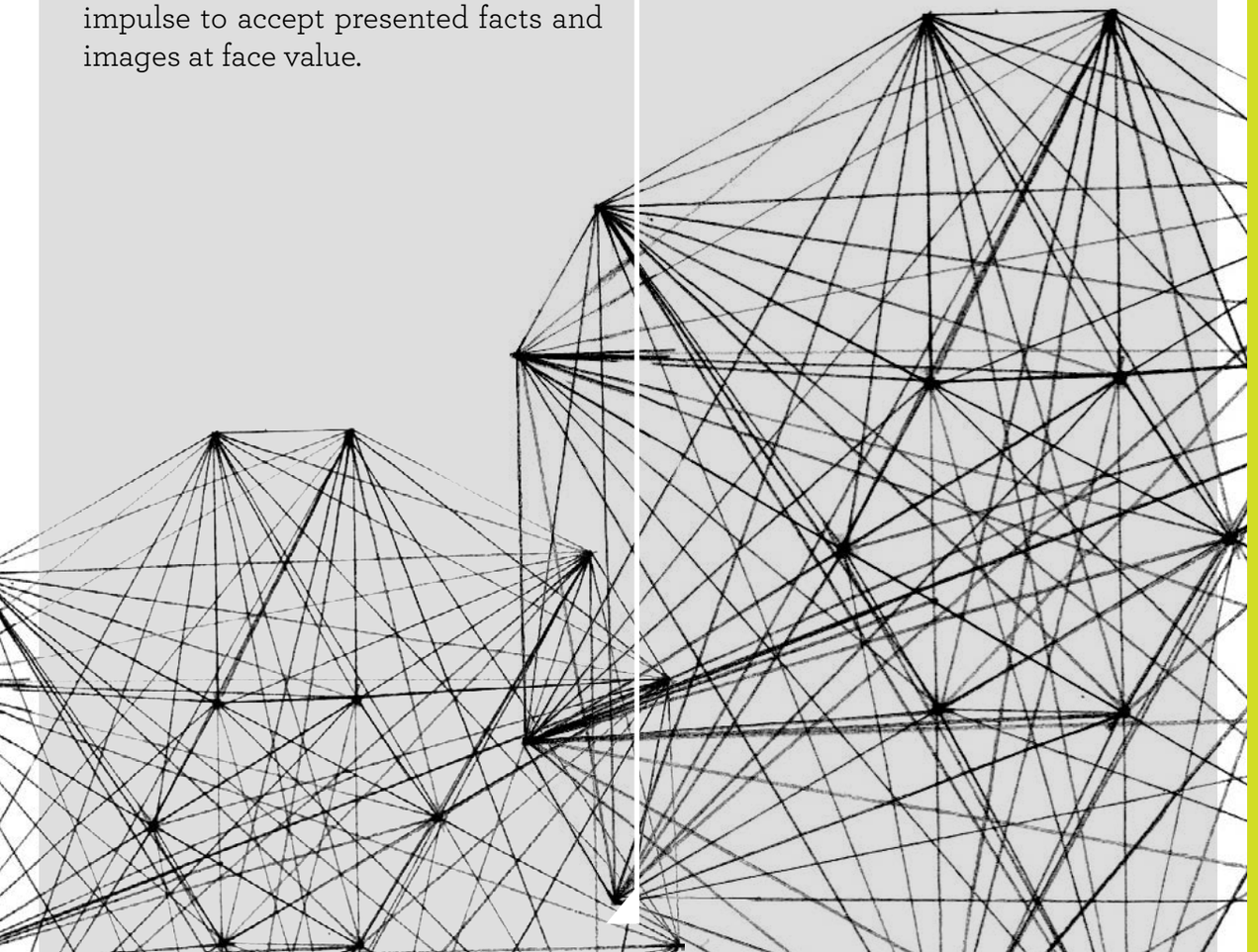
More images from *Fourth* and the complete *Mars Pamphleteer* video can be seen at:

http://www.mshweinstein.com



MICHELLE WEINSTEIN

Born in Toronto, and raised in Connecticut, Michelle earned her Bachelor of Fine Art from Maine College of Art and Yale University. She began exhibiting her work upon graduation and has been shown nationally and internationally. She has completed residencies in Newfoundland, Wyoming, Montana, Vermont and Norway. Most recently, Michelle has relocated from Los Angeles, CA to Vancouver BC as an MFA Candidate (2015) at the University of British Columbia.

STELLA MELCHIORI

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TELENEMESIS

Telenemesis has found its way into the lexicon of every Acolyte of The Super Actuality:

outside

"What?...*Telenemesis*?...What?...Why?"

"Are we talking about an avenging type of aesthetics here?"

"Are city planners taking this into account?"

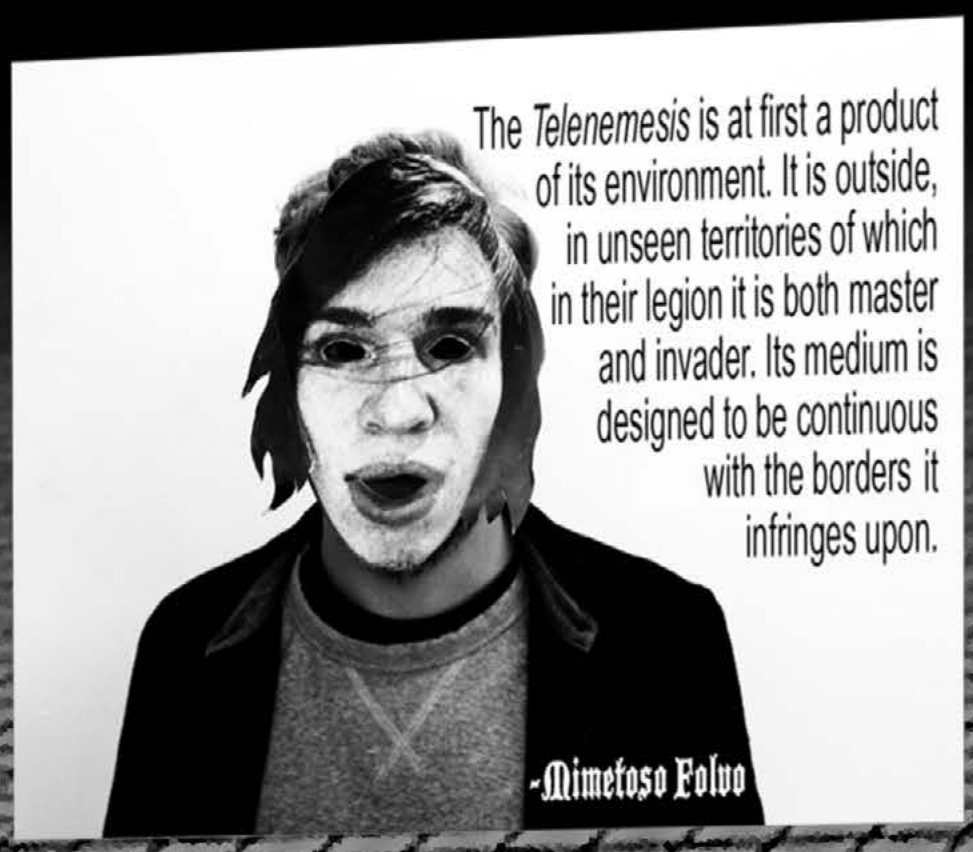
"Does the *Telenemesis* appear? Does it happen? Does it have to be there?"

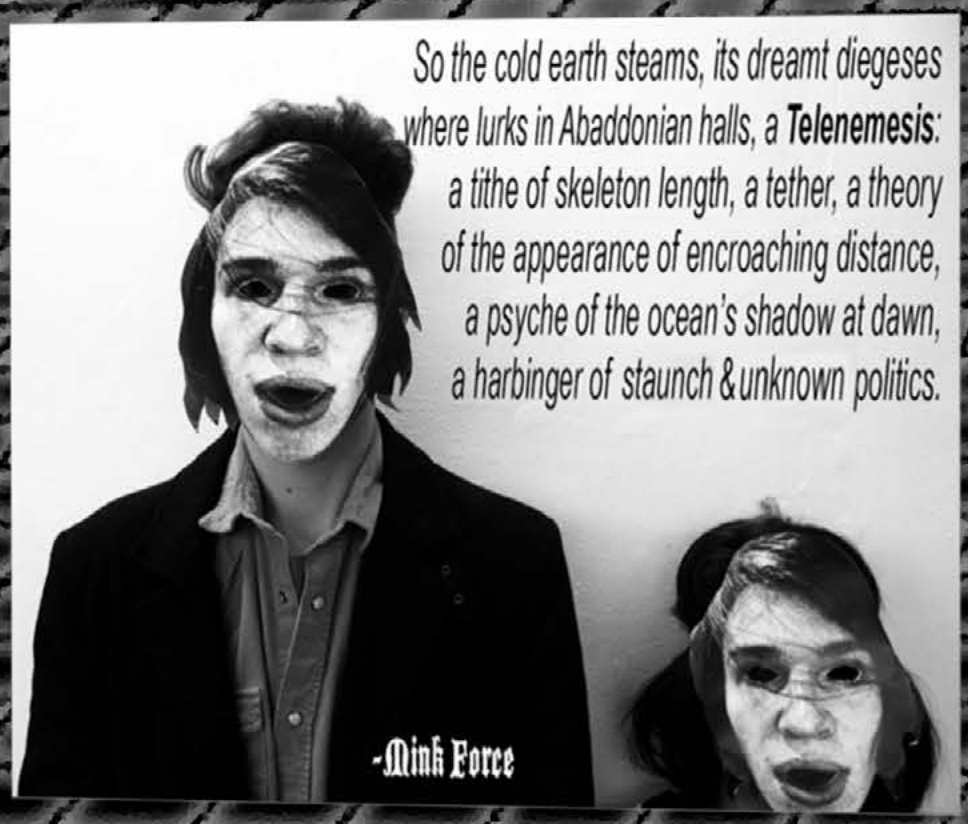
These questions are like aeolian fountains. They show up regularly but from any direction. Everyone is getting chilly and wet. Of course, Acolytes of **The Super Actuality** (which can be a wasteland of hazily realized argot), wish to make this anxiety into something more literal (at the very least literary). They are recording conversations and murmurs in their sleep. They are listening to these recordings while jogging until they become akin to the *Telenemesis* itself: ambient. nebulous, erupting, perpetually confounding...

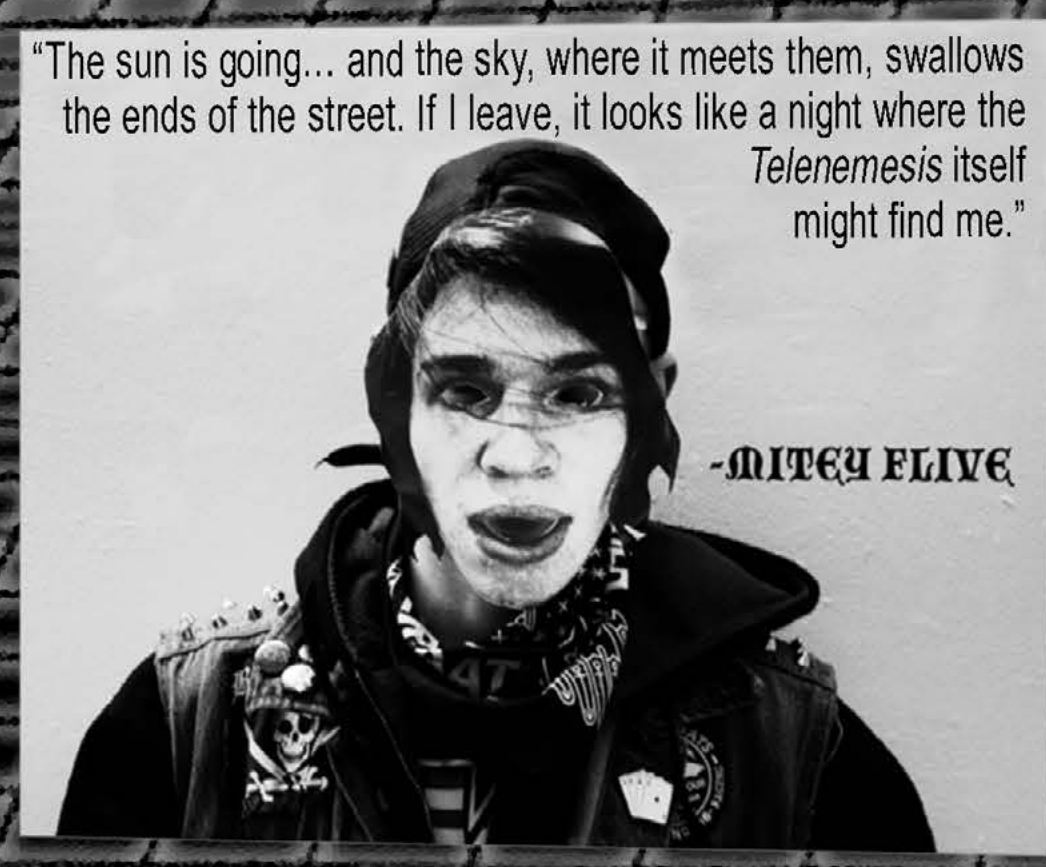
"My headphones are broken... Or are they telling me something?"

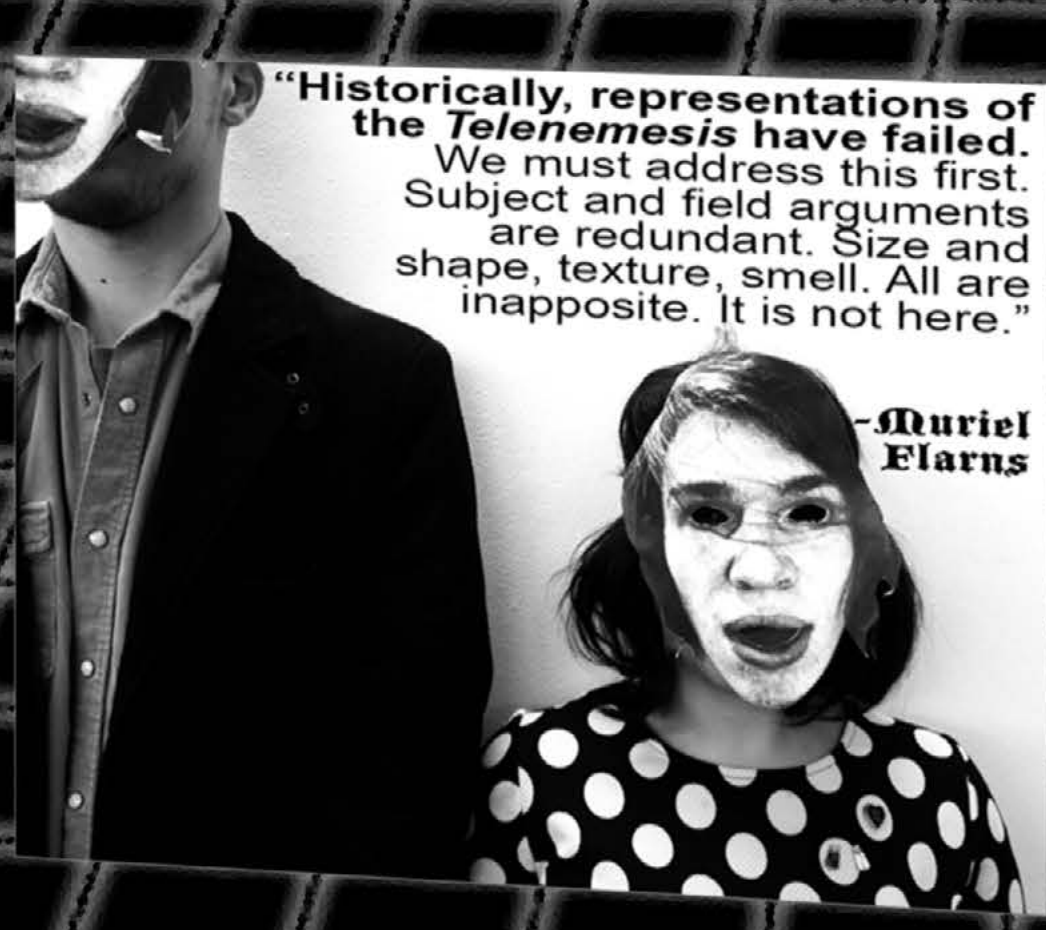
It is a productive anxiety in its potential prolificacy. Proliferated, it may even catalyze previously unacknowledged Acolytes into action. The official critical reveries of six Acolytes of **The Super Actuality** (Mimetoso Folvo, Mink Force, Mitey Flive, Muriel Flarns, Marceline Falkner, and Mame Fresca) have been fuzed into a single polyphonous utterance. Together they have become conjecture d'ameublement to simultaneously demand an answer,

"Is that the *Telenemesis* outside?"









https://soundcloud.com/thesuperactuality/telenemesis

Many Misty Myths

ZACHARY ANGELES

This presentation will propose an explanation for why young architectural offices are using myth-making as a means to further understand the role of world-building in contemporary architecture. Myth-making is a labour-intensive process that could, at first glance, seem incidental or discrete relative to the primary product, but in fact it is a critical mode of operation in these young offices. To support my claims, this paper will examine a handful of works by "youthful" offices: Bureau Spectacular, Design with Company, and MOS—based in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York respectively. In these offices, myth-making is not a dismissible or external influence on their creative practice but rather operates at the core of their generative and legitimating processes. Their myths go on, as myths do, to communicate complex ideological information to the occupant on behalf of the offices. These myths are explicated through fiction that borrows from other disciplines. Each of the three sampled works acts upon the occupant differently, presenting a rich tool for architectural production.

Of course, myth-making and myths are not entirely novel topics in architecture; when linguistic theory penetrated the architectural academy, it left a lasting impression. In his canonical collection of essays entitled *Mythologies* of 1957, French literary critic Roland Barthes writes, "myth is a type of speech" (Barthes 1972, 217). In so doing, Barthes highlights the role of myth in communication, where myths are both things in themselves and references beyond themselves. Barthes highlights how myths are present in both the everyday and the exceptional, in a series of situations, which includes an analysis of the various myths at work in an advertisement for canned crushed tomatoes. The cornucopia visible in the advertisement signifies an inherent Italian-ness based on a constructed myth of nationality as nothing in the image is truthfully from Italy (Barthes 1977, 37). Exploring the elements of the image, their figuration and relationships, Barthes reveals a method for mining the image and illustrates its more complex cultural entanglement.

When Jorge Luis Borges, Argentinean fiction writer, was faced with the shocking, situation-altering moment emblematic of the two World Wars, he sought to make sense of the world before him. Like many other artists at the time, his work rejected whole truths and instead capitalized on an act of searching. Borges' skepticism might explain his shift into a style of mythic unrealism as a method of projecting possible futures. This act of methodically "making strange" was also observed by James E. Irby in the in the introductory essay to *Labyrinths*:

> ...he has striven to turn this skepticism into an ironic method, to make of disbelief an aesthetic system, in which what matters most is not ideas as such, but there resonances and suggestions, the drama of their possibilities and impossibilities, the immobile and lasting quintessence of ideas as it is distilled at the dead center of their warring contradictions (Irby in Borges 1964, xiv).

The struggle to create meaningful work in the post-war context, characterized by the de-stabilization of singular realities, is per-

haps not unlike the post-post-modern situation in contemporary architectural practice where total truths and large movements are being questioned. Architecture has been destabilized by a loss of faith in the modernist drive towards single answers, a loss of faith in the postmodern allegiance with historicism, and the growing distrust of the recent fetishism with digital technologies and parametricism.

Recalling Borges' ironic method in his examination of Salvador Dali, Rem Koolhaas spells out tools for the paranoid critical method as a way of examining architecture and the architectural intent. In 1994, under the fitting title of "Otherworldliness," Koolhaas writes: "Architecture = the imposition on the world, structure it never asked for and that existed previously only as clouds of conjectures in the minds of their creators. Architecture is inevitably a form of [paranoid critical] activity" (Koolhaas 1994, 246). Koolhaas thus makes the argument: architecture always exists as arbitrary orchestrations of objects in space, according to a series of structuring logics the architect has produced. This complies with his two main tenets of the paranoid critical method. Firstly, one sees objects in relationships that support their hypothesis; secondly, these newly combined objects yield a new condition in line with their paranoid world image. This presents a framework for how architects might order their world—making, according to the arbitrary myths.

Playing through the question of a self-critical architecture as championed by, and epitomized in, the work of Peter Eisenman, Jorge Silvetti's essay in *Oppositions 9* seeks to pose a possible solution to the conversation surrounding autonomy in architecture (Silvetti 1977). Silvetti's essay argues, "It seems possible, then, to find place for both internal speculation and social responsibility, 'criticism from within' and 'collective myths,' the two inescapable voices that are uttered throughout architecture." In so doing, Silvetti opens up the possibility for myth to formally join the table of discursive tools in architecture. As a tool that unavoidably embodies social and ideological structures and situations, Silvetti claims that myth constitutes a "new content [that] covers the object" (Silvetti 1977, 271). This new content, or signifying veneer, provides an additional layer to the architectural object, without disallowing or discrediting the figuration of essential elements. Myth can be deployed to service a wide architectural discourse, which occurs outside of reductive topics of elements, or the diagrams.

Silvetti's essay was a direct response to Manfredo Tafuri's essay, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir," which first appeared in 1974 (Silvetti 1977, 297). Both share the common goal described in Silvetti's conclusion:

> Neither pure fact nor pure myth, architecture must unashamedly depict its ambiguous nature...'There are those who want a text (an art, a painting) without a shadow, without the 'dominant ideology'; but this is to want a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text...The text needs its shadows; this shadow is a bit of ideology, a bit of representation, a bit of subject: ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds; subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro (Silvetti 1977, 297).

Silvetti and Tafuri wish to see architecture synthetically, including complex socio-political situations contributing to its conception and design. This brings us to an analysis of three mythic constructs by three contemporary architectural practices, in which I seek to deploy the techniques for reading myth as explored by Barthes and Borges, looking for the shadows of their stories in an attempt to index the broader socio-political narratives with which they are interacting.

Bureau Speculator's "**Primitives**," takes the form of a graphic novel—a format not without its inherent biases and predispositions (Lai 2012). The graphic style and language lends a cartoonish ease to objects, altering the architectural product. The exaggerated lines and soft curves of the graphic novel are translated into architectures, and built form becomes the literal translation of this graphic language. The final architectural manifestation of the Primitives myth, a multisided thing entitled ***White Elephant***, is legitimated and creatively generated through a series of formal iterations that are represented in the myth's narration: The Man kills a deer in dramatic flourish. The man then proceeds to skin

said deer, stitch the skin together into a large fabric blanket and begins to dance with it—a courting ritual for the watching observer. His movements and forms are made static, and abstracted as a series of formal primitives. As such, the otherwise difficult-to-justify-geometry gains legitimation as the natural product of Bureau Speculator's constructed narrative, the product of the dance.

The characters in this fiction influence the design of the architecture and are deployed to orchestrate the relationship between occupant and object. "Primitives" stars a man, a woman, and a deer. The humans' nudity, lack of speech, and simple behavior recalls the Abrahamic origin myth, adopting this well-known narrative as the foundation for the text. The Man inhabits the skin adjacent the corpse and subsequent movements allow the flesh to transform: skin to fabric. Jumping from the page to the architecture, the fabric is transformed into rigid plastic geometries; the myth transforms deer into object, man into designer/creator, and woman into occupant.

The *White Elephant (Privately Soft)* project demonstrates the power of an origin myth to explain design: succinctly, implicitly and in a way that evades criticism or traditional architectural analysis. Reading the myth and artifact as a collective product allows for a higher level of criticality insofar as myth is brought to the fore as an object of disciplinary relevance. For the sake of indexing, the origin myth presented here is a performative myth. It slickly insinuates itself as the choreography of performances.

Stewart Hicks and Allison Newmeyer's ***Pavilion MMM***, designed under their shared name Design with Company (Dw/Co.), is represented in two presentation boards and a short video. The project introduces for us in two ways the myth of authenticity. First, a series of factors grant the proposal authenticity by reinforcing the legitimacy of the office and, in a self-reflexive gesture, the proposal. Second, the proposal privileges re-purposed chair, suggesting the intrinsic value of the chair exceeds that of other common objects.

The proposal utilizes myths of authority established through the format of the presentation. The proposal finds a white and material-less urban landscape to receive the architecture—an architecture that has already joined this fictional, sterilized landscape in that it is also sterile. Material uniformity extends the presumption of reality through to the architecture itself, setting up a myth, which must be actively denied. As such, the presentation lends itself authority by showing what is as opposed to what could be. The proposal's video opens with a brief testament to the myth of authenticity in its introduction of the office. The smiling partners are posed, faces of both domesticity and professionalism. They are positioned to validate the proposal as fashionable young designers. This sort of professionalism is reinforced by the credits that roll at the end of the clip. This simple feature bestows the proposal an authenticity that is understood to accompany these cinematic tropes.

Beyond authenticating the proposal, the project plays with the authenticity of its objects—the five short vignettes in the film mythologize the life of the common chair. A passive object sees an animated journey, not unlike those featured in a Disney film—*The Brave Little Toaster* or *Toy Story*, for example, where inanimate objects are made cartoon and given personality. The chairs in this supposedly neutral, plastic world are canonized. They become the "authentic" artifacts of the project, the authentic occupants of Dw/Co.'s sterile, decontextualized Miami. Dw/Co.'s proposal frames the project with myths of authenticity, as myths that carry with them acculturated allegiance and acceptance.

This leads me to the final example of myth-making in contemporary architecture, which examines ***afterparty***--the work of Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample, or MOS. In her 2013 essay "Architecture Beside Itself," Sylvia Lavin discusses the expanded nature of MOS's architectural production stating, "[films/myths] sit beside architecture, surrounding it even, simultaneously making it more visible and diffusing its reception" (Lavin 2012, 93). MOS's large furry, thatched pavilions for the MOMA PS1's 2009 summer contest came with a **statement** from the practice, that their project sought to "[rethink] and [resituate] architecture not only its conceptual and formal economies but also its inherent ability to produce visceral intimate environments." This statement from MOS

gives a clue as to the intended role of the thirty-minute video produced to accompany the installation—its mythic content contributes towards their aim to "rethink and resituate architecture."

The film stars a crowd of occupants wearing white jumpsuits, who move in slow motion through space surrounded by a haze of small translucent dots. The crowd acts as a speculative population, a fictional projection towards a mythic future, and a sharp commentary on the throngs of New Yorkers who will party under the pavilion. A narrator dryly recites information regarding the architecture and native population in a documentary style. The film presents a fictionalized world that the architecture is projected into, collapsing the mythic fiction with the reality of the pavilion. This disjunction draws the mythic landscape into conversation with the surrounding cityscape, causing slippages in the perceived environment. The imagined world forms a new, fictionalized context for the pavilion. This projecting of location into a future context removed from the urban causes a schizophrenic moment, where the architecture exists in this fictionalized landscape at the same moment it occupies an empty lot in New York City.

The project not only casts the architects as authors of the architectural product, but also the cultural, environmental, and ideological world surrounding it. The narrator, then, is a puppet through which MOS speaks about their internal struggles with design and explain what their design seeks to accomplish with dogmatic or over-stated claims. They are able to project their design into a distant future to interrogate architectural possibilities at the same time that they criticize the contemporary situation.

MOS' myth parallels the architecture, charging it with meaning and context, but dodges determinism by distancing the voice of the narrator from that of the authorial voice. The creators instead place it in the mouth of the curious investigator or documentarian. One might remember Borges' tales of curious academics attempting to make sense of irrationality and convoluted worlds as perhaps precedents for this sort of distanced ironic commentary. The pavilion would thusly constitute a sort of situational myth where the architectural situation is coated in a narrative parallax that skews readings of the architectural object.

In the face of increasing disciplinary questioning, the mythic turn in architecture is not entirely unlike Borges' attempts to address large problems obliquely, and effectively, through myth-making. As stated, myth pulls together isolated elements in a glossed shell, making it an effective mode of explicating the paranoia of the author. Myth makes paranoia—design intent/concept/narrative—visible in this way. The paranoid critical method gains the authority through stories—that is, events are checked against the projected reality as much as realities understood by the observer. It also has the definitively positive effect of rendering myths as tools. Once visible, new methods of analyzing and criticizing underlying myths can be developed and deployed. Through an examination of three projects, I have illustrated three myth typologies as follows:

> The *myth of performance* reveals the lingering performative creation of the architectural object and choreographs the occupant's future performance in relation to the object. The *myth of authenticity* charges media with an unquestionable presentation and reception. The *myth of situation* fully envelops the architectural object, making it alien in its own context, projecting upon its surface layers of additional information through which the viewer, and creator, sees and engages with the architectural object. These categories speculate landmarks against which operative myths in architecture might be indexed and potentially further mobilized.

In a world where disciplinary practitioners perceive themselves as functioning without a stable context—disciplinary, historically, or culturally—it makes sense that myths find their way into praxis as an explanatory resource. Through employment of myths in service of design, many contemporary architects are able to anchor reality to the complex worlds of the architect's imagination.

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